

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the lexical errors made by the subjects. The errors were first classified into different categories and then followed by a description and explanation of these errors.

4.1 Classification of Errors

A total of 704 errors were found in the 200 essays. These errors were classified into two main types: interlingual errors and intralingual errors. The interlingual errors were subdivided into two categories and the intralingual errors were further divided into nine categories.

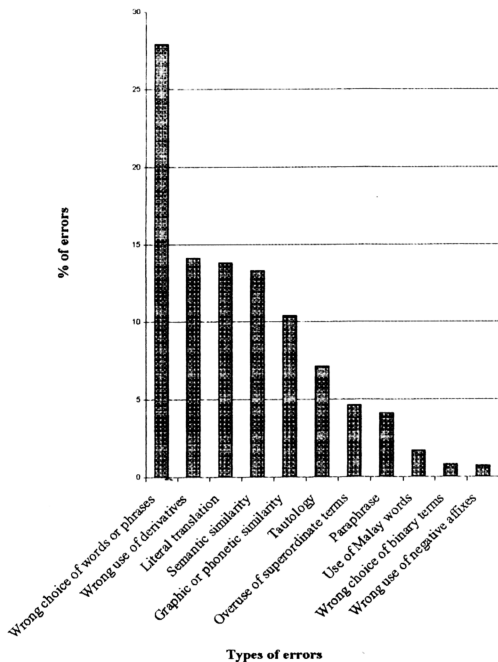
These categories of errors are shown in Table 4.0 on page 50. The number and percentage of each type of error were also calculated. The same categories of errors are also presented in Figure 4.0 on page 51.

The number of errors committed by the subjects were numerous. However to describe and explain each one of them is unnecessary. The researcher has selected only some representative examples from every category of errors. This is explained in the following section in 4.2.

Table 4.0
Types and Frequency of Lexical Errors

Types of Errors	No. of Errors	%
Interlingual Errors:		
Literal translation	99	14.1
Use of Malay words	12	1.7
Total	111	15.8
Intralingual Errors:		
Wrong choice of words or phrases	200	28.4
Wrong use of derivatives	101	14.3
Semantic similarity	95	13.5
Graphic or phonetic similarity	74	10.5
Tautology	51	7.2
Overuse of superordinate terms	33	4.7
Paraphrase	29	4.1
Wrong choice of binary terms	6	0.9
Wrong use of negative affixes	4	0.6
Total	593	84.2
Sum total	704	100

Figure 4.0
Types and Frequency of Lexical Errors



4.2 Description and Explanation of Errors

4.2.1 Interlingual Errors

111 errors or 15.5 % of the lexical errors fell into this category. The two types of interlingual errors identified were literal translation and use of Malay words.

4.2.1.1 Literal Translation

This type of errors accounted for 14.1 % (99 errors) of the total lexical errors made by the subjects. It is the third highest in terms of frequency of errors. Literal translation was subdivided into three categories, that are, from Chinese to English, from Malay to English and from Chinese and Malay to English. Examples of such errors are shown below:

(1) Chinese to English

1. When I was walking to school with Ai Ling, the day was still black.
天 黑
When I was walking to school with Ai Ling, the sky was still dark.
2. From that day began, I will never trick a person anymore.
从那天开始
From that day onwards, I will never trick a person anymore.
3. After school I walked back home.
走 回 家
After school I walked home.
4. Every weekend my father brings us went to shopping.
带 我 们 去 购 物
Every weekend my father brings us shopping.
5. When the clock arrived 10.00 p.m. o'clock, we went home.
到 了 晚 上 十 点 钟

When the clock struck ten at night, we went home.

6. The situation of the dinner is noisy and hot

热闹

The dinner was well attended and it was a joyful occasion.

7. She always hang up a smile face.

挂 笑容 脸

She always smiles.

8. I feel alone (lonely) at night when mother needs to work addition time.

加班

I feel lonely at night when mother needs to work overtime.

In sentence 1, the two lexical errors are 'day' and 'black'. The student associated them with the Chinese compound word '天黑' and then literally translated it into English. This explains why the lexical errors were made. In sentences 2 – 5, the students translated Chinese into English word by word, thus producing the phrases 'From that day began' instead of 'From that day onwards'; 'walked back home' instead of 'walked home'; 'bring us went to shopping' instead of 'bring us shopping' and 'arrived 10.00 p.m. o'clock' instead of 'struck ten at night'.

In sentence 6, 'noisy and hot' is a literal translation of '热闹' where '热' means 'hot' and '闹' denotes 'noisy'. The compound word '热闹' means lively, joyful or bustling with noise and excitement. It is usually used to describe a lively and joyful occasion. 'Hot' and 'noisy' do not convey the correct atmosphere. It should be expressed as: 'The dinner was well attended and it was a joyful occasion'.

In sentence 7, the student intended to say ‘她的脸上常挂着笑容’, which means ‘She always smiles.’ The words ‘脸’, ‘挂’ and ‘笑容’ mean ‘face’, ‘hang’ and ‘smile’ respectively. This is a case of word translation or lexical transfer (Ringbom, 1983) in ‘She always hang up a smile face’. This also applies to sentence 8. The phrase ‘to work overtime’ means ‘加班’ in Chinese. The word ‘加’ denotes ‘add’. This may have prompted the student to substitute ‘to work overtime’ with ‘to work addition time’.

Sentences 1 – 8 show that the students had resorted to their MT. They tended to think in Chinese when they were writing. They constructed the Chinese sentences first before they wrote them in English. Blum and Levenston (1978:409) claim that “thinking in the mother tongue is the only way a learner can ever begin to communicate in a second language.” The interference of MT or language transfer (Selinker, 1969; Richards, 1974) happens when certain concepts of the MT are transferred to the TL. However, thinking in the MT has produced ambiguous English sentences.

(2) Malay to English

The following sentences show literal translation from Malay to English. This is another common strategy employed by L2 English learners.

9. Reading story books can help to improve my essay with fast.
dengan cepat
Reading story books can help to improve my essay quickly.
10. I visited my village in India.
kampung

(3) Chinese and Malay to English

The above findings are further supported by the examples of sentences below which are a result of interference from both Chinese and Malay.

12. She told me that she will shift to Malacca.

搬
pindah

She told me that she would move house to Malacca.

13. He said he did not love me again.

再
lagi

He said he did not love me anymore.

14. My mother is polite, good hearted and hardworking.

好 心
baik hati

My mother is polite, kind and hardworking.

15. I very like the life in (the) village.

很 喜欢
sangat suka

I like the life in the village very much.

16. I followed my mother went back to hometown.

我跟母亲回去家乡。
Saya mengikut ibu pulang ke kampung.

I went back to my hometown with my mother

In sentence 12, 'shift' was used instead of 'move' because the student was influenced by the words '搬' and 'pindah'. Similarly, 'again' was used instead of 'anymore' in sentence 13; 'good hearted' instead of 'kind' in sentence 14 and 'very like' instead of 'like..... very much' in sentence 15. In sentence 16, 'followed' is the product of lexical transfer from '跟' and 'mengikut'. Moreover, '我跟母亲回去家乡' and 'Saya mengikut ibu

pulang ke kampung' are acceptable sentences in Chinese and Malay where both '跟' and 'mengikut' means 'going with'. This possibly explains the lexical error. Hence, it can be concluded that literal translation is a result of interference from the MT and Malay. This is further confirmed by the results of the interviews conducted. The teachers unanimously commented that the learners almost always think in Chinese and Malay when they write.

Besides interference, there are also other possible causes for the lexical errors committed. The findings reveal that the subjects often produced wrong lexical items whenever one Chinese or Malay word has several equivalents in English as in sentence 1, '天' for 'day; sky', '黑' for 'black; dark'; in sentence 10, 'kampung' for 'village; hometown'; in sentence 12, '搬' for 'move; shift; carry' and 'pindah' for 'shift; move; remove; transfer'. The learners probably had assumed that for every word in their mother tongue or Malay there is a single translated equivalent in the TL. This application of a learning hypothesis that lexical items are translation equivalents to, or have the same semantic features as items in the TL or some other language he or she knows well is called lexical transfer by Ringbom (1983).

4.2.1.2 Use of Malay Words

Only 1.7 % of the total lexical errors fall under this category. They are illustrated below.

1. He was educated in an Inggeris school. (*English*)

2. Television gives us information about the new teknologi. (*technology*)
3. When we are (boring) we can watch televisyen at home. (*television*)
When we are bored, we can watch television at home.
4. The television in the moden world are very (advancing). (*modern*)
Television in the modern world is very advanced.
5. We also need to pay the bill elektrik with high prices. (*electricity bill*)
We also need to pay more for the electricity bill.
6. We can also watch the live konsert on television. (*concert*)
7. Watching television also (effect) our akademik. (*academic*)
Watching television also affects our studies /academic performance.
8. The seks movies are bad for the young people. (*sex*)
The pornographic movies are bad for the young people.
9. I went to the pasar and bought some santan. (*market, coconut milk*)
10. I followed mother came to an atap house.
I followed mother to a hut.

The causes of the above lexical errors can be explained by grouping the errors into two categories: the use of Malay loan words and the use of Malay words. In sentences 1- 8, the Malay words 'Inggeris, teknologi, televisyen, moden, bil elektrik, konsert, akademik and seks' are loan words from English. They are formed from English words by modifying certain letters (Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 1987). The Malay loan words and their English origin are quite similar in pronunciation and spelling. The subjects had confused them with their English spellings: 'English, technology, television, modern, electricity bill, concert, academic and sex' in the TL due to their phonetic and graphic similarities. Besides that, inability to identify the differences between 'academy' and 'study' may also

explain the error in sentence 7. In sentence 8, the subject possibly had not learnt the word 'pornography' before or perhaps he has learnt the word but does not know how to use it. As a result, 'sex' is used instead of 'pornographic'.

There is intrusion of Malay words in sentences 9 and 10. In sentence 9, 'pasar' and 'santan' are Malay words equivalent for 'market' and 'coconut milk' in the TL. In sentence 10, 'atap' is a kind of palm leaf used for making roof. In Malaysia 'atap house' usually refers to the small, wooden house with 'atap' roof. The appropriate word in the TL is 'hut'. The intrusion of Malay words in sentences 9 and 10 is a clear case of code switching because the words 'pasar', 'santan' and 'atap house' are very commonly used and understood in Malaysian English. However, the English forms are preferred when there are English equivalents for these Malay words.

Arabski (1979) states in his analysis of the lexical errors made by Polish learners of English that "the most obvious influence of L1 is seen in the use of L1 lexical items" and he refers to this phenomenon as "lexical shift". In this study there is a complete absence of "lexical shift", not one single example was identified. The subjects wrote Malay words instead of their MT (Chinese) in place of the English words. There are several possible reasons for this.

Firstly, the errors may be attributed to the "perceived language distance" (Kellerman, 1977; Ringbom, 1982). Malay is perceived as being closer to English compared to Chinese that is perceived as distant in relation to English. As mentioned

earlier, certain lexical items in Malay are loan words from English. They look and sound similar as shown by the lexical errors in sentences 1-8. In other words, there is a close relationship between the Malay and English words. Therefore, it is easier to resort to Malay words instead of Chinese characters. This is further supported by Chen's research (1990) which reveals that Chinese learners of English tended not to use first language based communication strategies because of the great distance between their MT and the TL. Secondly, unlike English and Malay words which are formed from twenty-six letters, each Chinese word is represented by a character which is unique by itself in terms of graphology and phonology. The use of Chinese characters in an English sentence is unacceptable in form compared to Malay words. Lastly, all the teachers interviewed, except one who can read simple Chinese, do not know how to read Chinese. This possibly had prompted the students to use Malay words instead of Chinese words.

4.2.2 Intralingual Errors

A total of 593 errors or 84.2% of the errors are intralingual errors. This error type is subdivided into nine categories.

4.2.2.1 Wrong Choice of Words or Phrases

This refers to the selection of inappropriate words or phrases for the context used. It forms the largest group of errors made by the learners, that is 28.4% or 200 errors out of the sum total of 704 errors. Some examples of this error type are given below:

1. I quickly changed my character and started to listen (to the teacher). (*attitude*)
2. Watching television can neglect their studies if they are too absorbed in it. (*affect*)
3. The incident was known by the headmaster as soon as possible. (*immediately*)
The headmaster came to know the incident immediately.
4. Mathematics is my prefer subject. (*favourite*)
5. We must be careful when we are choosing the reading equipment. (*material*)
6. We must be clever to choose the menu of television. (*television programmes*)
7. My mother shifted me to another school in Cheras. (*transferred*)
8. My mother also has many advantages. For example, she can cook delicious food. (*strong points*)
9. When she is matured, she went to work. (*After she had graduated*)
10. Life in the village is comfortable and interesting. (*simple*) (*relaxing*)

The above examples show that the learners had chosen the lexical items that are incorrect for the context used. The wrong choice of words or phrases may be attributed to several factors. One important factor is incomplete learning, that is, the learners had not properly understood the meanings or functions of the lexical items which they had chosen or both. The learners had learnt the words or phrases 'character, neglect, as soon as possible, prefer, equipment, menu, shift, mature, advantage, comfortable, interesting' but did not know how to apply them correctly or had failed to observe lexical restrictions. In other words, they had only partially learnt the lexical items. Another possible cause may be due to their limited vocabulary stored in their mental lexicon. They probably had not learnt the correct words or some of the correct words used in the context. All the teachers interviewed

supported the above explanations. They commented that the wrong choice of words or phrases is the result of poor understanding of the meanings of words and a limited vocabulary.

Ignorance of collocation is another cause for the wrong choice of words. Collocation is concerned with the company that a word usually keeps. Firth, the British linguist (Palmer, 1976:94) mentioned that “ you shall know a word by the company it keeps” . Therefore collocation may be viewed as being a part of the meaning of a word and the use of wrong collocation will make the sentence erroneous. Wrong choice of words due to the ignorance of collocation are exemplified in sentences 11 - 18:

11. She seldom loses in her examinations. (*fails examinations*)
12. This will make many problems to the country. (*cause problems*)
13. The youngsters must know how to prepare their time. (*plan time*)
14. I hated her because she didn't listen to my reasons. (*listen explanations*)
15. I realised that I had attended the wrong hall. (*entered hall*)
16. The boat that we used is very beautiful, big and luxurious. (*boat boarded / travelled in*)
17. Many new colleges and course(s) are published in (on) television. (*advertised television*)
18. I was surprised and happy because I did not know I win the prize. (*surprised and happy I did not expect to win*)

In sentence 11, 'lose' collocates with 'contest' or 'fight' . It does not collocate with 'examination' . Similarly, in sentences 12-17, 'make' does not

collocate with 'problem' , 'prepare' does not collocate with 'time' , 'listen' does not collocate with 'reason' , 'attend' does not collocate with 'hall' , 'boat' does not collocate with 'use' and 'publish' does not collocate with 'television' . In the last sentence, 'I did not expect to win' collocates better with the feeling 'surprise and happy' instead of 'I did not know I win' . The problem of collocation is also be due to the lack of collocation exercises in second language learning as all the teachers interviewed stated that they do not emphasise collocation in vocabulary lessons.

Another probable explanation for wrong choice of words or phrases is false analogy.

Following are some examples:

19. I prepared to go to school by leg.

I prepared to walk to school.

20. We turned on the sound loudly.

We increased the volume. / We tuned the volume higher.

21. I cannot sleep along the night.

I cannot sleep the whole night.

22. The village make up of thirty-two houses.

The village comprises thirty-two houses.

In sentence 19, the phrase 'go to school by leg' is likely due to the false analogy of the phrases 'go to school by car' or 'go to school by bus' . Similarly, the phrase 'made up of thirty-two houses' in sentence 22 may be caused by the false analogy of 'make up of cells' or 'make up of different parts' . False analogy could be the result of the drilling activity in the classroom when the learners were in primary schools. Drilling is a common practice in second language learning for

primary pupils in Malaysia. For instance, 'turn on the sound' in sentence 20 may be due to the drilling exercise with 'turn on' in the classroom, such as 'turn on the light, turn on the fan, turn on the television, turn on the radio'. Similarly, the error 'along the night' in sentence 21 can be traced to the drilling on the word 'along', like 'along the road, along the street, along the river, along the corridor'. This process where the errors are a result of identifiable items or phrases in training procedures is known as "transfer of training" (Selinker, 1972).

4.2.2.2 Wrong Use of Derivatives

A total of 101 errors or 14.3 % of the total lexical errors belonged to this category. This error type has the second highest frequency after the category of wrong choice of words or phrases.

Complexity within the TL itself is the main cause of this error type. A careful study of the errors revealed that the learners were confused with the different forms of the TL. The different forms: noun, verb, adjective and adverb are interrelated. For instance, abstract nouns can be formed from common nouns like: child – childhood; leader – leadership; king – kingdom. They can also be formed from adjectives such as: kind – kindness; hungry – hunger; high – height. Similarly, adjectives can be formed from nouns, verbs and also other adjectives like: talent – talented; culture – cultural, help –helpful; talk – talkative; red – reddish, and comic – comical. Adverbs are formed from adjectives usually by adding 'ly', for example: slow – slowly;

quiet – quietly and foolish- foolishly. From the study, errors due to confusion between different forms can be grouped into four groups. Some examples are shown in the Tables below. The words in brackets indicate the correct words that should be used in the context.

Table 4.1

Confusion between Nouns and Verbs

Nouns	Verbs
Choice	(Choose)
Success	(Succeed)
(Invitation)	Invite
Recovery	(Recovered)
Injury	(Injured)
(Cooking)	Cook

Table 4.2

Confusion between Nouns and Adjectives

Nouns	Adjectives
Friend	(Friendly)
Violence	(Violent)
(Confidence)	Confident
Education	(Educational)
History	(Historical)
Health	(Healthy)
Adventures	(Adventurous)
(Boredom)	Boring
Truth	(True)
Kindness	(Kind)

Table 4.3

Confusion between Verbs and Adjectives

Verbs	Adjectives
(Attract)	Attractive
Respect	(Respectable)
Frighten	(Frightening)
Shine	(Shiny)
Raining	(Rainy)
Enjoy	(Enjoyable)

Table 4.4

Confusion between Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives	Adverbs
(Alone)	Lonely
(Neat)	Neatly
(Logical)	Logically
(Scientific)	Scientifically
Convenient	(Conveniently)
(Loud)	Loudly
(Kind)	Kindly
(Happy)	Happily

In Table 4.1, the learners cannot differentiate between nouns and verbs. For instance, the learner had learnt the words 'choice' and 'choose', but he could not identify which is a noun and which is a verb. Thus, 'choice' was used instead of 'choose'. Likewise, the inability to differentiate between 'noun and adjective', 'verb and adjective' and 'adjective and adverb' has lead to the errors in Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

Wrong use of derivatives due to confusion between different forms are given in the examples below:

1. He was a kindly, helpful and intelligent gentleman. (*kind*)
2. It was so (very) horrible and frighten. (*frightening*)
3. She is also a hardworking and responsibility girl. (*responsible*)
4. When she cried, I felt misery and sad. (*miserable*)
5. I can't (could not) believe it but it was truth. (*true*)
6. He always talking (tells the) true. (*truth*)

In sentences 1-4, the words 'helpful, intelligent, horrible, hardworking, sad' indicate that the learners knew that an adjective is used to describe a person or thing, but they could not identify that 'kindly' is an adverb, 'frighten' is a verb, 'responsibility' and 'misery' are nouns. Similarly, the inability to differentiate between adjective and noun created the errors in sentences 5 and 6 where 'truth' was used instead of 'true' and vice versa. Hence, inability to distinguish the different forms in the TL is one of the possible causes for wrong use of derivatives.

There are also instances where the learners did not know when to use the different forms. The following are some examples:

7. That was a silence night and my brother and I were watching television. (*silent*)
8. Once (one) Sunday, my father proposed to visit the history places. (*historical*)
9. I felt very disappointment. (*disappointed*)
10. There are still more other activities to (that can) get rid of our boring such as reading..... (*boredom*)

11. He will try hard until he success. (*succeeds*)
12. She accepted my invite. (*invitation*)
13. She is also good in cook. (*cooking*)
14. There are many books that we can read, but we must know how to choice a good book to read. (*choose*)
15. My mother never left me lonely at the bed. (*alone*)
16. I always do something to attractive her.
I always do something to attract her attention.

Sentences 7-10 show that the learners did not know when to use nouns and adjectives. Sentences 11-14 indicate that the learners used nouns and verbs interchangeably. Sentences 15 and 16 reveal that the learners did not know when to use an adverb, an adjective and a verb. The above examples clearly show that wrong use of derivatives is also attributed to the learners' ignorance of the usage of different forms of words in the TL. Another possible reason for the wrong use of derivatives is due to the lack of practices or emphasis on derivatives in the classroom as admitted by all the teachers in the interviews.

4.2.2.3 Semantic Similarity

This refers to the erroneous word which has a similar meaning with the intended word but which is contextually inappropriate. 13.5% of the lexical errors identified belong to this category. The following are some examples which illustrate this error type:

1. Books can be divided into different species such as fiction and non-fiction. (*types*)
2. She used different ways to teach us. (*methods*)
3. She decided to work to decrease her parents' pressure. (*reduce, burden*)
4. Students can expand their knowledge by watching educational programmes. (*increase*)
5. We also can ascend our vocabulary through reading. (*increase*)
6. It (watching television) will influence our studies. (*affect*)
7. The party finished at ten o'clock. (*ended*)
8. The howling voice started again. (*sound*)
9. The investigation showed that a big percentage of Malaysian do not like to read. (*survey*)
10. The police asked several questions to find out who had participated in the violence. (*been involved, riot*)

The above examples show that the learners had problems in choosing the appropriate lexis for a particular context. The learners could not differentiate between the deviant words and the correct words, which are semantically close but are used in different contexts. It has been generally argued in semantics that there are no real synonyms in language and that no two words have exactly the same meaning. According to Nilsen (1975:155) the difference in meaning among synonyms may be a difference in style, in geographical distribution, in formality, in vulgarity, in attitude of the speaker, in collocation, in connotation and possibly in some other ways. In sentence 1, 'species' and 'types' are semantically close. 'Species' might have the features [+plants, +animals] and 'types' might have the features [+things, +people, +plants, +animals]. The restrictions placed on the choice of lexical items are

so fine as to the extent that the distinction between the two synonyms becomes very hard to realise for the foreign learners of English that they would use the words interchangeably. Likewise, the inability to differentiate the subtle differences between 'ways – methods' , 'decrease – reduce' , 'pressure – burden' , 'expand – increase - ascend' , 'influence – affect' , 'voice – sound, 'finished – ended' , 'investigation – survey' , 'participated – involved' and 'violence – riot' has also resulted in the lexical errors in sentences 2-10.

This error type can also be attributed to the learners' strategy in using the dictionary. Eight teachers or 88.89% of the teachers interviewed said that most learners take pocket dictionaries that are either monolingual or bilingual to school. If the learners needed to know the meaning of a word, they would select from a list of synonyms given in the dictionary. Hence, the use of a short, abridged dictionary which lists loose synonyms without detailed explanations or examples of the sentences in which a word is used is another source for this kind of errors.

Foreign language learners of English are always taught to learn synonyms. In the study of synonyms, the learners have built up hypothesis that synonyms can be used interchangeably based on his limited experience of the language. This false concept hypothesis is aggravated when there is insufficient practice of the synonyms in appropriate contexts. All the teachers interviewed confirmed that the learners know the meanings of the words but they do not know how to use them in suitable contexts.

Eight out of the nine teachers interviewed did require their students to keep a vocabulary book. A check on the vocabulary books kept by the students showed that more than half of the students wrote down the synonyms of the words, which they were required to find in English, Chinese Malay. Seldom did they copy the sentences that show how the words are used in the context. This reason further explains the cause the errors in the above sentences.

Semantic confusion may also be due to interference of another language. Lexical items that are distinguishing in meaning in one language but which have only one equivalent in another language may cause semantic confusion. In the study, Many lexical items that are distinguishing in meaning in English but which have only one equivalent in Malay were found. The following are some examples:

11. Until now, I still cannot receive the fact that she had passed away. (*accept*)
12. When the children do mistakes, he never scolds them. (*make*)
13. They never leave me alone at house. (*home*)
14. She lives not far away from my home. (*house*)
15. My mother is a caring people. (*person*)

In sentence 11, the words 'receive - accept' have the Malay equivalent 'terima'. The Malay equivalent covers both in meaning. Consequently, the learners who had difficulty in distinguishing the meanings of 'receive - accept' thought that the words can be substituted with each other. This applies to words like 'do - make', 'house - home', 'people - person' in sentences 12-15 which

are semantically close but have Malay equivalents 'buat' , 'rumah' , and 'orang' respectively. Therefore, it is easy for the students to commit such lexical errors.

4.2.2.4 Graphic or Phonetic Similarity

Lexical errors could also be caused by mutual interference of items within the TL. In lexis, words are often confused as a result of formal similarity. One of the main sources of error in lexical choice that accounted for 10.5% of the total is due to graphic and phonetic similarity. Under this error type, the deviant words used are graphically and phonologically close but are semantically unrelated to the correct forms. Some examples from the essays are illustrated below:

1. Luckily my brother was save and sound. (*safe*)
2. She will never except what I have suggested. (*accept*)
3. Television can help us to relax when we have pleasure. (*pressure*)
4. Reading can be a very good hobby went you are free. (*when*)
5. I fell boring (bored). (*felt*)
6. The children thing the action is good. (*think*)
7. We walked around the village until we reached a big train. (*drain*)
8. I was short. (*shocked*)
9. I can feel the plain on my body. (*pain*)
10. Soon they use(d) a role to tie me up..... (*rope*)
11. We were quite in the car. (*quiet*)

12. There was no one to great me "happy birthday" . (*greet*)

The above examples show that the subjects have difficulty in discriminating between certain pairs of words which are similar both in graphic and phonetic but unrelated in semantic. In the sentences above, the graphic of the deviant words and the correct forms look similar to each other. Phonetically, there is also a slight difference between the erroneous words and the correct forms. The learners possibly could not distinguish between the voiced and voiceless pairs such as [v/f] in 'save - safe' ; [d/t] in 'drain - train' . Although the place of articulation is the same for [v/f] (labiodental consonants) and [d/t] (alveolar sounds), they are voiced and voiceless pairs in word final position. The students also could not differentiate the difference between [ŋ] and [ŋk] in 'thing' and 'think' respectively. The voiceless stop [k] is deleted, while in 'great - greet' , [ci] is a diphthong and [i:] is a long vowel.

Faulty pronunciation is another possible cause of this error type. When the learners are unable to pronounce the sounds correctly, the faulty pronunciation will be reflected in the written work as errors. For example, if the learners pronounce /ək'sept/ as /ɪk'sept/; /felt/ as /fel/; /peɪn/ as /pleɪn/; /rəʊp/ as /rəʊ/, they will write 'accept' as 'except' ; 'felt' as 'fell' ; 'pain' as 'plain' and 'rope' as 'role' respectively. This is a clear case of (mis)pronunciation transfer into spelling.

There are also some instances where the wrong words are attributed to either graphic similarity or phonetic similarity. The following are some examples:

13. We know the weather thought the news. (*through*)
14. I shall repay her kindness and effect by doing well in the examinations and being obedient. (*effort*)
15. We can improve our grammar and skill of writing easy by reading. (*essay*)
16. The overwhelming smile came from the shoes. (*smell*)
17. My furious grandmother came out from the house and scolded me before I got heard. (*hurt*)

In sentences 13-17, the errors are probably due to graphic similarity between them and their correct forms. The subjects had difficulty discriminating 'thought – through', 'effect – effort', 'easy – essay', and 'smile – smell' although the pairs of words sound differently. In sentence 17, the error is due to phonology.

'Heard' is a long vowel and final voice stop consonant, while 'hurt' is a short vowel and final voiceless stop consonant. This error is very common because in Malay the vowels are more or less equal in length, and the voiceless stop [t] is usually deleted in pronunciation. The learners can not differentiate the sound between 'heard' and 'hurt' although they are different graphically.

4.2.2.5 Tautology

About 7.2% of the lexical errors identified in the corpora belong to the tautology category. It is concerned with the use of a word that merely repeats some of the elements or meanings of another word in the same sentence. Because the word is a needless repetition, it is considered as redundant and therefore erroneous. Some examples of tautology are illustrated below:

1. I was shocked and the two guys escaped away.
2. I felt someone followed behind me.
3. Most of the children like to see cartoon movies.
4. Television presents many entertainment programmes like singing concert, sports, games and others.
5. Miss Alice is aged 55 years old.
6. Her hair is black in colour, short and neat.
7. The bus was full of many people.
8. We will get many benefits and advantages if we choose the good reading materials.
9. The advertisements on television could able to inform the consumers about new products.
10. Both my two hands were holding food.
11. He is a tall person and quite thin.
12. The teacher gave it back the book to me.
13. Although we passed up her homework but we still felt sorry for her.
14. It also provides foreign country news.
15. My mother is the only one person that I admire in my life.

In sentence 1, 'away' is a mere repetition of some elements of the word 'escaped', which means 'to get away'. It is therefore redundant and erroneous. In sentence 2, 'behind' is redundant because it is also a mere repetition of some of the meanings of the word 'followed' which means 'move behind in the same direction' or 'to go after'. The tautological errors in sentences 1 and 2 can be attributed to false analogy of 'run away' and 'stand

behind' . This shows the active involvement of the learners in the process of learning the language as they are formulating and applying hypothesis about the structure of the TL. Likewise, the words 'movies' , 'singing' , 'aged' , 'in colour' , and 'many' in sentences 3-7 are also needless repetitions of meaning and hence they are redundant.

Tautological errors also occurred when the learners included both words, which are synonymous in the same sentence. This is illustrated in sentences 8-10 where 'benefits - advantages' , 'could - able to' , 'both - two' are synonyms. In order to correct the errors, either word or phrase in the synonyms is dropped. In sentence 11, the word 'person' is redundant because the pronoun 'he' is already an indication for people. Likewise, 'the book' in sentence 12 is a repetition for the word 'it' . Tautological errors may also be due to MT interference. 'Followed behind' in sentence 2 can also be attributed to MT interference. It is derived from the direct translation of the Chinese phrase '跟在后面' . In sentence 13, the learner has transferred the Chinese conjunction '虽然……但是' , which is always used together into English as 'Although...but' , the word 'but' being redundant in English. In sentence 14, 'foreign country news' is influenced by the Chinese phrase '外国新闻' . The word 'country' is redundant and this may be due to its equivalent '国' in the Chinese phrase. The same applies to sentence 15 in which 'only one' is influenced by the Chinese compound word '唯一' . '一' and 'one' are equivalents and this may explain the redundancy in the sentence.

4.2.2.6 Overuse of Superordinate Terms

Overuse of superordinate terms is another category of wrong lexical choice. It accounted for 4.7% of the total number of errors. Overuse of superordinate terms refers to the abusive use of hypernyms instead of the hyponyms to express the intended meanings. That is, the learners had selected a general term in place of the specific term to convey their meaning. For instance, the use of superordinate term or hypernym 'flower' to substitute the hyponym 'rose '. The four most common superordinate terms identified in the compositions were 'good' , 'nice' , 'bad' and 'thing' . The following are some examples extracted from the compositions:

1. A good teacher cannot be valued (judged) just on how she teaches. (*dedicated*)
2. I started to find a good time to trick the teacher. (*suitable*)
3. Reading is very good for us. (*beneficial*)
4. I felt very good when talking to her. (*comfortable*)
5. That is a good choice. (*wise*)
6. She is friendly and good. (*kind*)
7. They wished me a nice birthday. (*happy*)
8. He is a nice guy. (*helpful*)
9. The view was very nice. (*beautiful*)
10. We may become bad people if we watch too many violent movies. (*aggressive*)
11. Some movies have a bad influence on the children. (*negative*)

12. It (watching television) will make their result bad.
It will cause their results to deteriorate.

Examples in sentences 1-9 reveal that the learners had used the superordinate terms 'good' and 'nice' to substitute for all the terms reflecting positive quality like: dedicated, suitable, beneficial, comfortable, wise, kind, happy, helpful and beautiful. Likewise, the learners had used the superordinate term 'bad' to mean all the things that are not good such as: aggressive, negative and deteriorate as shown in sentences 10-12.

The word 'thing' is another superordinate term that is loosely used by the learners. It makes the sentences sound odd and their meanings vague as shown below in sentences 13-18.

13. She has many things that we do not have. (*strong points*)
14. We should not spend our leisure time doing disadvantage things like loitering and gambling.
We should not spend our leisure time on activities that are not beneficial like loitering and gambling.
15. When I was sick, he always bought me things and did funny things to make me happy. (*acts*)
16. With planning, we can make thing better without wasting time. (*do our work*)
17. We will be the laughing thing of other people. (*laughing stock*)
18. Children will learn the bad thing from television. (*violent acts*)

The reader has to guess the meaning of the 'thing' intended in the contexts. It also makes the essay monotonous and uninteresting. Moreover, it shows the inability of the learners to express their ideas precisely.

One of the causes of overuse of superordinate terms is lack of vocabulary. When the learners' vocabulary is limited, they will resort to words that they know and familiar with. Another possible cause is overgeneralisation, a process in which the learners have acquired the general rules of the TL and then extend its application to context where it is unacceptable. For instance, the learners knew that the word 'good' is used to express all the positive aspects of an object, and they then applied to all contexts irrespective of their restrictions on meaning and usage. Overgeneralisation is the result of lexical simplification strategy commonly employed by second language learners to overcome the problem of limited vocabulary (Blum and Levenston, 1978; Richards, 1975). When learners do not have the vocabulary to express their ideas, they will choose a superordinate term to solve their problem.

4.2.2.7 Paraphrase

In the study, it was also found that when the learners did not have a word, they would use a paraphrase which consisted of two or more words and the paraphrases are not normally acceptable in English. About 4.1% of the lexical errors were paraphrases. The following are examples of this category:

1. Many parents like to buy books for their son and daughter to read. (*children*)
2. My mother and father marriage is very good (happy). (*parents'*)
3. My face still goes red each time I think of that most embarrassing moment. (*blushes*)
4. I saw my grandmother was seriously ill and her face showed white. (*was pale*)
5. Without television people's lives will less enjoyment. (*be dull*)

6. Some television programmes like joke movies and laughing movies can make people to get free after a busy day in the office. (*comedies, relax*)
7. With no any attention, the woman crashed the car with a loud noise. (*Accidentally*)
8. Through the news programmes in and out the country, students are able to follow all the events that occurred everywhere. (*local and foreign news*)
9. I promise my teacher that I will work hard in the day to coming. (*future*)
10. Some programmes can let our knowledge to ascend. (*increase our knowledge*)
11. He can solve some difficult incident easily. (*problems*)
12. He will neglect his schoolwork if he only knows watching television. (*is addicted to television*)

In the above sentences, the learners had used short phrases where single lexical items were more appropriate. It is interesting to note that the learners had used different ways to paraphrase the intended meanings. In sentences 1-4, the learners paraphrase by providing the synonyms of the intended words. This prompted the learners to write 'son and daughter' instead of 'children', 'father and mother' instead of 'parents', 'goes red' instead of 'blushes' and 'white' instead of 'pale'. In sentence 5, the opposite of the correct lexical item was used: 'less enjoyment' is the opposite of 'dull'.

The third way of paraphrasing and also the most commonly applied by the learners was by providing the semantic features of the intended lexical items. This can be seen in the underlined parts in sentences 6-12. They consisted of words that are semantically related to the intended words. In sentence 6, the words 'joke' and 'laughing' are semantically related to the intended word 'comedies' and

'free' is related to 'relax'. The same applies to 'no any attention - accidentally', 'in and out the country - local and foreign', 'coming - future', 'ascend - increase' and 'difficult incident - problems' in the other sentences. In sentence 12, the words 'only knows' are indirectly related to the intended word 'addicted'. The phrase 'only knows watching television' is a literal translation of the Chinese phrase '只会看电视' which carries the meaning 'likes to watch television very much and spends much time watching it'.

The use of paraphrase produced awkward expressions that are non-native. The cause of paraphrasing could be due to limited vocabulary. In the study, when the learners could not find an appropriate word to express their thoughts because of limited vocabulary, they tended to use several words, sometimes more than necessary, to describe their thoughts. Paraphrasing can also be regarded as a simplification strategy which the learners employed to replace lexical items that they didn't know.

4.2.2.8 Wrong Choice of Binary Terms

Binary terms refers to two lexical items that are relationally opposite to each other such as 'teacher - student', 'teach - learn' and 'lend - borrow'. About 0.9 % of the lexical errors belong to this category. The binary terms which had been identified as being used wrongly were 'this - that', 'come - go' and 'bring - take'. Of these, 'come - go' was the most common. Some examples follow:

1. I will never forget this day. (*that*)
2. This was the day that I will never forget. (*That*)
3. When I fall (fell) down from the bicycle, he quickly pull (pulled) me up and bring me home. (*took*)
4. She told us the reason why my father did not went home. (*come*)
5. I thought that the teacher would went in first but I was wrong. (*come*)
6. I (was) very happy and come with him. (*went*)
7. After a week, grandma (grandmother) went back to home. (*came back home*)

Pairs of binary terms show reverse relationship rather than opposites in meaning. They tend to cause confusion and this has prompted the learners to use them as substitutes for each other (Zughoul, 1991). The inability to identify the differences between the binary terms is another possible cause. The differences in meaning between the binary terms 'bring -take' and 'come - go' depends on the relation between users of the language and the circumstances in which they are used, while 'this - that' depends on the time reference. Moreover, little or no consideration being given to this linguistic circumstance could also lead to this error type.

4.2.2.9 Wrong Use of Negative Affixes

In the study, there were four instances or 0.6 % of the total number of lexical errors which involved wrong use of negative affixes. Affixes are added at the beginning or at the end of a word. An affix that is added at the front of a word is called a prefix

whereas an affix that is added at the back of a word is known as a suffix. All the examples of wrong use of affixes are illustrated below:

1. It can cause some people to behave rudely and unpolitely. (*impolitely*)
2. Many people in Malaysia unlike reading. (*dislike*)
3. Some television programmes are unmeaning. (*meaningless*)
4. I found my classroom and my seat without any helpless from other people. (*help*)

In the data, prefix 'un' was used to denote 'not' in the first two sentences and 'no' in the third sentence. In sentences 1-3, the learners had used 'un' instead of 'im', 'dis' and 'less' respectively. This is a clear case of the overgeneralization of rule or the ignorance of rule restriction. The learners had learnt that 'un' indicates opposite meanings such as 'unkind', 'unlucky', 'unhappy' and then overgeneralized the rule to all words if they wanted to convey an opposite or a negative meaning without knowing that there are exceptions to the rule. This showed that they were aware of the existence of a system for forming negatives but had not mastered the system well. In sentence 4, the learner wrote 'helpless' instead of 'help'. This could be due to the interference of the word 'without'. The learner possibly had thought that both 'without' and 'less' which indicate negation should be used together.

The wrong use of negative affixes here has led to the production of words that do not exist in English like 'unpolitely' and 'unmeaning'. The cause of such errors could also be traced to the lack of practices on affixes in the classroom

because students are not taught affixes formally following the communicative syllabus when the Integrated Secondary School Curriculum (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah or KBSM) was introduced in 1987.

4.3 Conclusion

The data analysis has provided an overall picture of the subjects' competence in the use of vocabulary. The findings reveal that in writing essays, the Chinese students committed both interlingual errors as well as intralingual errors and some sources of these errors were explained. A discussion of the findings will be given in Chapter 5.